



Hanau's Vernon Miles rounds third on his way to scoring against Ansbach during the Installation Management Command-Europe Child and Youth Services Junior Baseball Championship tourney.

Schinnen takes IMCOM-Europe junior baseball tourney

HANAU, Germany – A team from U.S. Army Garrison Schinnen, the Netherlands, earned the Installation Management Command-Europe Child and Youth Services Junior Baseball Championship held here June 1-3.

However, every young participant came away a winner, said tournament organizers.

“The main goal of our program is not about winning,” said Kerwin Walker, director of Hanau CYS sports and fitness. “The focus isn’t on scores – who won or who is the best,” he said. “We look to have fun, learn the basic fundamentals of baseball, good sportsmanship, and respect for others and for the game.”

While winning and losing are not the focus, they do provide powerful lessons, according to the teams’ volunteer coaches.

“The kids learn that everyone in life is going to win sometimes and lose sometimes,” said Hanau Pirates head coach Scott Morris, whose team finished third. “The difference is in how they accept both winning and losing. You don’t ever give up; you keep trying to give your best with every single pitch.”

The Hanau community team put this into practice in an early bracket game against the White Sox from U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart, Germany. “We came back from a deficit and did not give up,” Morris said.

Hanau’s 15-year-old Vernon Miles hit a fifth-inning grand slam to seal the victory.

“They say it’s (winning) not important, but we want to win,” Miles said with youthful candor. “But nobody wants to go home a loser, especially on your home field.

“The last couple of years in the finals we didn’t win a game; this year we got third,” Miles said. “Yes, it’s all about having fun; but we wanted to win, to play our best.”

According to Morris, the toughest team was USAG Schinnen, the Netherlands. “They had an amazing amount of good baseball players on their team,” he said.

Schinnen might have been considered underdogs, especially “because we’re a small community; we don’t have a pool of talent to draw from,” said coach Richard Ruiz. Plus they also had a relatively short season, with some doubleheaders cancelled. Still, the Diamondbacks went undefeated in the tournament, including a victory over second-place Stuttgart.

“I ran my practices to teach the fundamentals and to play collectively as a team,” Ruiz said. “I wanted them to understand that they all contribute, from the first player down to the last player.

That was the difference in our team — how we were able to come together.”

The USAG Wiesbaden, Germany, team came together for an entirely different reason. In a game against USAG Heidelberg, Germany, player Alex Langley was seriously injured and taken to a hospital. “My team was very upset and had a hard time playing after that,” said head coach Jack Finnegan.

“However, my boys kept saying ‘this game is for Alex.’ We came from behind 8-0 to win the game against Heidelberg, 9-8.” While the team was shaken by Langley’s injuries, Finnegan said, “I just kept telling them to focus on the game — that Alex would want the team to keep trying to win.

“I told the kids there will be times in life where you can’t control what happens around you,” he said. “So you have to focus on what you can control and do the best with whatever you can control.”

Other participating teams were from Vilseck and Ansbach, Germany; and Vicenza, Italy.

Story and photo by Susan Huseman
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